Modals of Ability Exercise 1

Put in ‘can’ / ‘can’t’ / ‘could’ / ‘couldn’t’. If none is possible, use ‘be able to’ in the correct tense:

1. __________________ you swim when you were 10?
2. We __________________ get to the meeting on time yesterday because the train was delayed by one hour.
3. He _________________ arrive at the party on time, even after missing the train, so he was very pleased.
4. He’s amazing, he _________________ speak 5 languages including Chinese.
5. I _________________ drive a car until I was 34, then I moved to the countryside so I had to learn.
6. I looked everywhere for my glasses but I _________________ find them anywhere.
7. I searched for your house for ages, luckily I _________________ find it in the end.
8. She’s 7 years old but she _________________ read yet – her parents are getting her extra lessons.
9. I read the book three times but I _________________ understand it.
10. James _________________ speak Japanese when he lived in Japan, but he’s forgotten most of it now.
11. I _______________ understand the chapter we had to read for homework. It was so difficult.

12. I _______________ lift this box – it’s too heavy! Would you help me?

13. Lucy _______________ make it to our meeting after all. She’s stuck in traffic at the moment.

14. John _______________ play tennis really well. He’s champion of his club.

15. Unfortunately, I really _______________ sing at all! No-one in my family is musical either.

16. When the car broke down I was really pleased because I _______________ solve the problem.

17. Julian _______________ play excellent golf when he was only ten.

18. My grandmother _______________ use a computer until last month. Since then, she’s been taking lessons at the library.

19. I _______________ open this window. I think it’s stuck!

20. Gill _______________ play the piano. She’s never studied it.
Answers:

1. Could you swim when you were 10?
2. We couldn’t get to the meeting on time yesterday because the train was delayed by one hour.
3. He was able to arrive at the party on time, even after missing the train, so he was very pleased.
4. He’s amazing, he can speak 5 languages including Chinese.
5. I couldn’t drive a car until I was 34, then I moved to the countryside so I had to learn.
6. I looked everywhere for my glasses but I couldn’t find them anywhere.
7. I searched for your house for ages, luckily I was able to find it in the end.
8. She’s 7 years old but she can’t read yet – her parents are getting her extra lessons.
9. I read the book three times but I couldn’t understand it.
10. James could speak Japanese when he lived in Japan, but he’s forgotten most of it now.
11. I couldn’t understand the chapter we had to read for homework. It was so difficult.
12. I can’t lift this box – it’s too heavy! Would you help me?
13. Lucy can’t make it to our meeting after all. She’s stuck in traffic at the moment.
14. John can play tennis really well. He’s champion of his club.
15. Unfortunately, I really can’t sing at all! No-one in my family is musical either.
16. When the car broke down I was really pleased because I was able to solve the problem.
17. Julian could play excellent golf when he was only ten.
18. My grandmother couldn’t use a computer until last month. Since then, she’s been taking lessons at the library.
19. I can’t open this window. I think it’s stuck!
20. Gill can’t play the piano. She’s never studied it.